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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Cornell begins 'new era' in Lake Erie region grape research**

by Aaron Goldweber

PORTLAND, N.Y. -- Nearly 100 years have passed since the New York state legislature appropriated \$10,000 to the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) to establish a grape research laboratory in Fredonia, N.Y. With a new site chosen and more than \$5 million of state funding appropriated in May 2006, Cornell University is poised to break ground for a new laboratory that will conduct innovative research and extension programs to serve grape growers in Western New York and beyond.

The lab will be built on 53 acres of land recently purchased by Cornell from Jim and Penny Deakin. Cornell made the purchase based on the recommendations of a task force of leading growers, processors, and researchers. Planning for new experimental research vineyards will begin this winter. Groundbreaking for the laboratory itself will occur next spring.

"This state-of-the-art facility will begin a new era in Cornell's rich history of commitment to the grape and wine industry in the Lake Erie region," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

The facility will provide expanded field research; modernized laboratory space for research on juice and wine quality; additional office space for research and extension staff, and visiting scientists; and meeting space for grower education and training.

Rick Dunst, manager of the lab, said researchers at the current facility have made major advances in the areas of vineyard mechanization, grapevine physiology, development of economic thresholds, and effective control programs for insect and disease pests of these grapes. Researchers have increased yields, improved quality, and lowered production costs of grapes grown in the Lake Erie region, especially Concord and Niagara.

Tom Davenport, director of viticulture for the National Grape Cooperative, said, "The new facility represents the realization of an industry initiative that began in 1991 when the Lake Erie Regional Grape Research and Extension Program was formed. The new facility will be the foundation for the development of new technology that will be transferred to grape producers throughout New York state and enable them to successfully compete in today's global marketplace."

State Senator Catharine Young led the recent effort to secure state funding for the project with major support from Assemblyman Bill Parment, who has been working to find funds to modernize the lab for more than 10 years.

"Cornell University has provided premier research and services through the Vineyard Lab for many years, not only to local farmers, but to growers across the state and the Great Lakes region," said Young, chair the Senate Agriculture Committee.

"The key to success for the grape industry has been a combination of hard work on the part of our growers with applied research and extension coming from the grape experiment station. A new facility will give the industry a basis for productivity gains going forward. I'm pleased that we have reached this important milestone," said Parment.

Cornell researchers such as the late Nelson Shaulis, who is internationally renowned as one of the fathers of modern viticulture, and E. Frederick Taschenberg, a research entomologist whose career at Fredonia spanned five decades, dedicated their careers to grape growers and processors in Western New York. Since 1961, Cornell has conducted research and extension programs on a 30-acre vineyard and converted potting shed in the Village of Fredonia. The existing laboratory and field research acreage will be sold. Proceeds will be invested in the long-term operations of the new facility in Portland.

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